



THE FLY LEAF

PUBLISHED BY THE
FRIENDS OF THE
FONDREN LIBRARY
AT RICE UNIVERSITY
HOUSTON, TEXAS

THE FLYLEAF

Quarterly
January 1969

Vol. XIX, No. 2

RICHARD LYTLE

One of the Fondren Library's most significant acquisitions during 1968 was Mr. Richard H. Lytle, who now holds the position of University Archivist and Curator of Special Collections and is the author of the article which follows.

A Rice graduate of the class of 1959, Mr. Lytle carried on post-graduate study in History at Washington University and at Cornell. After a term as Assistant Local Records Archivist for the State of Illinois, during which time he visited and advised with officials of 101 counties, he became Archivist at Washington University in St. Louis. Here he developed a program for the care and use of the University's records, indulged his special interest in the history of technology with some interesting articles, and began a community program for preserving and making available to researchers the archives of business and industry.

Mr. Lytle was induced to return to his alma mater last year, and as the first professional archivist at Rice he brings to the campus a new concept of archival management. His article explains the new facility at Rice and the possibilities for its use.

H.C.

THE FONDREN LIBRARY RESEARCH CENTER

Rice faculty, librarians, and friends have achieved a goal of long standing, the establishment of a facility for care and use of rare books and manuscripts. As readers of the FLYLEAF know, Rice faculty and friends have contributed to the collection of research materials, and several members of the library staff, notably Pender Turnbull, have cared for rare books and manuscripts. But the facilities in the Fondren basement were never adequate for books, manuscripts, researchers, and staff, and out of necessity the rare book room was a part-time operation. The construction of the Fondren addition, just completed, and the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin N. Woodson, made the new facility possible. The hopes and aspirations of many years have been realized.

The design and appointments of the Research Center express its purpose of service to scholars. The reading room, inspired by the Huntington Library, provides scholars with large desks, comfortable chairs, and a pleasant atmosphere for research. Staff areas are designed to provide efficient service with a minimum of disruption in the reading room. Provisions for care of books and manuscripts are thorough. Security is ensured by controlled access to the area, and by a large combination-lock vault for especially valuable materials. Fire protection is provided by a carbon dioxide system which can extinguish fire without damaging materials. Book and manuscript capacity is increased by installation of high-density shelving, and growth of the collections has been anticipated by provisions for expansion.

Operational guidelines have been established. In its first year the Research Center is open from nine to twelve and from one to four, Monday through Friday. Rice faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and

visiting scholars are welcome to use the materials, and all friends of Rice are invited to visit. Scholars regularly using the collections may be assigned desks in the reading room. A statement of regulations for the Research Center may be obtained at the Center or by mail.

The holdings of the Research Center fall into three categories: rare books, manuscripts, and Rice University Archives. Rare books are retained in the Research Center because of monetary or research value. The reasons for retaining valuable books under security provisions are self-explanatory. The criteria for determining research value are not so easily described, and are, in practice, difficult to formulate and apply. A clear example of research value is the department's largest and best known book collection, the Axson collection. A memorial to Rice Professor Stockton Axson, the collection contains a wealth of eighteenth-century British plays, including many editions of the same plays. The value of these books lies not so much in their individual or cumulative monetary value as in their research value as a collection; many additions to the collection are purchased for five dollars or less, but their value far exceeds market price because of their relationship to the whole. The Axson Collection presents an unusually clear example of research value; but it is toward this goal, and not acquisition of expensive items as such, that rare book acquisition is directed.

The Research Center contains a number of manuscript collections which have come to the University by both gift and purchase. Although some items would command high prices, again the purpose of obtaining these materials has been research rather than monetary value. There is a wide variety in the collections, varying from ships' logs to letters to scripts of plays, and from nineteenth-century England and Mexico to twentieth-century America.

In its third function the Research Center serves as the Rice University Archives. Once this program is underway, the University Archives will contain the permanent, non-current records of Rice University. Already the Archives has, for example, records of the President's office, extensive legal records relating to the foundation of the University, and a file of University publications. University records are made available to scholars to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the interests of the University and the privacy of its officers. The Archives also collects private papers of Rice faculty, which have the greatest research potential of all items in the University Archives.

The new facilities have permitted major staff additions. The head of the Research Center is the University Archivist and Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts; he is trained in history and experienced in archives administration. The department has one full-time assistant, and the part-time assistance of Pender Turnbull. Occasional student and other part-time assistance is secured for special projects.

As the description of the Research Center reveals, completion of the new facilities represents a considerable accomplishment; patrons, staff, and research materials are well provided for, and expansion can be accommodated. But the new facilities present even greater challenge than accomplishment. The challenge is to build an important collection of research materials at Rice. Books will be received by gift and purchase. Establishment of a University Archives program will serve to collect documents of interest to a broad range of scholars. The greatest opportunity, however, lies in the area of manuscript collections, where Rice University can contribute substantially toward documentation of the history of Houston and the Southwest. A critical period lies ahead, in which the course of the program will be determined. Collecting interests must be defined, and precedent-setting collections

must be pursued and acquired. Staff must be acquired for processing. Not the least of the projects is to make the resources of the Research Center known to Rice scholars and to the entire academic community.

Although the Research Center will continue to grow in the traditional manner of a depository for research materials, it must do more. It must encourage other institutions to preserve documentation and to make their resources available to scholars on their own premises. The Research Center should offer its professional services to selected local government offices, business and civic institutions, and work with them to identify archival material for preservation; in some organizations the interest in archives will be present, while in others a major aspect of the project will be to encourage archives-consciousness. In addition to servicing its own collections, then, the Research Center would serve as a catalyst for preservation of materials elsewhere and as a source of information about special research materials in public and private institutions throughout the Houston region.

The foundations for the Research center--its facilities, its staff, and its collections--have been laid. The prospects for development are very promising, calling for all the initiative and creativeness that the faculty, staff, and friends of Rice can muster.

Richard H. Lytle
University Archivist and
Curator of Rare Books and
Manuscripts

SPECIAL GIFTS

Mrs. J. S. Leach has made an unrestricted gift of \$500 to the Fondren Library.

Dr. and Mrs. William S. Dix have made a gift of \$200 to the Library, through the Rice Alumni Fund--\$33 Million Campaign. Friends will remember that the Dix's two sons graduated from Rice. This gift will be added to the William Shepherd Dix Fund for American Literature, which was set up by the Friends at the time when Dr. Dix resigned from the Fondren to become Librarian of Princeton.

Other gifts to the Library through the Rice Alumni Fund--\$33 Million Campaign have come from:

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What may be considered a welcome sign of progress and maturity in the financial affairs of the Library has come through two generous donations to be used as endowment:

from Mrs. M. H. Hurlock: a gift of \$11,000 as a memorial fund in memory of Ruth Daugherty; to be invested, and the income to be used to purchase books.

from Robert K. Jewett: a gift of \$5,000 as a memorial fund in memory of Charles Fred Jewett and Lillian Kimpton Jewett; to be invested, and the income to be used to purchase books.

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